

# Next Phase of Groundwater Investigation Begins

**Ellsworth Industrial Park Site**

Downers Grove, Illinois

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## For more information

To learn more about the site investigation contact:

*For technical questions:*

### **Leslie Blake**

EPA Remedial Project Manager  
312-353-7921

[blake.leslie@epa.gov](mailto:blake.leslie@epa.gov)

### **Brian Conrath**

Illinois EPA Project Manager  
217-557-8155

[Brian.Conrath@Illinois.gov](mailto:Brian.Conrath@Illinois.gov)

*For general questions:*

### **Teresa Jones**

EPA Community Involvement  
Coordinator  
312-886-0725

[jones.teresa@epa.gov](mailto:jones.teresa@epa.gov)

## **EPA Chicago Office address:**

U.S. EPA Region 5  
77 W. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604

## **On the web:**

<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/ellsworth-industrial-park>



*A contractor collecting groundwater samples.*

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency are supervising an investigation into potentially contaminated groundwater surrounding the Ellsworth Industrial Park Superfund site. “Groundwater” is an environmental term for underground sources of fresh water.

The work planned for this investigation will be conducted in phases. The initial phase of the study includes installation of four groundwater monitoring wells. The wells will be installed based upon the groundwater sample results from the first well sampling location. That well is located along the centerline of the historical groundwater plume. A “plume” is a mass of contaminated groundwater that tends to move.

A large sonic drill rig the size of a tow truck will be used. The drill rig uses high frequency mechanical vibration to collect continuous sample cores. Groundwater grab samples will be collected from three intervals at the first well location. Depths will range from 10 feet, 25 feet and 50 feet below the top of bedrock. The depth to the top of bedrock ranges from approximately 110 feet below ground surface to 130 feet.

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## **History and background**

The Ellsworth Industrial Park site is an active industrial area in Downers Grove, DuPage County, Ill. Built in the late 1950s, the industrial park currently includes about 135 businesses. The site encompasses the contamination source areas and the area in which chlorinated-solvent groundwater contamination has been detected.

From May 2001 through January 2002, Illinois EPA sampling efforts identified groundwater contamination that threatened private drinking water wells in unincorporated areas of Downers Grove. U.S. EPA and Illinois EPA have worked together to identify possible sources in and near the Ellsworth Industrial Park of the volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, found in the groundwater. The contamination consists mainly of trichloroethylene, or TCE, and tetrachloroethylene, or PCE, which are commonly used chlorinated solvents.

Sometimes with complex cleanup sites, U.S. EPA splits the location into smaller areas called “operable units,” or OUs. To manage this cleanup, the federal Agency divided the site into two operable units. OU 1 consists primarily of commercial and light industrial properties. OU 2 consists of residential, recreational and commercial properties.

On July 28, U.S. EPA and 13 potentially responsible parties, or PRPs, reached a settlement agreement for the Ellsworth Industrial Park site and signed a document known as an Administrative Order of Consent or AOC.

The AOC covers the remedial investigation and feasibility study, or RI/FS, for groundwater in the area of the site known as OU 2. Insufficient information exists on the current nature and extent of groundwater contamination in OU 2. That means the contamination must be fully characterized and cleanup options identified and evaluated in the OU 2 RI/FS.

The investigation is important because it is currently unknown whether people may be exposed to unacceptable levels of contamination if the groundwater plume continues moving. Also, the groundwater aquifer in the area of the site could serve as a potential future source of drinking water.

## **Cleanup progress**

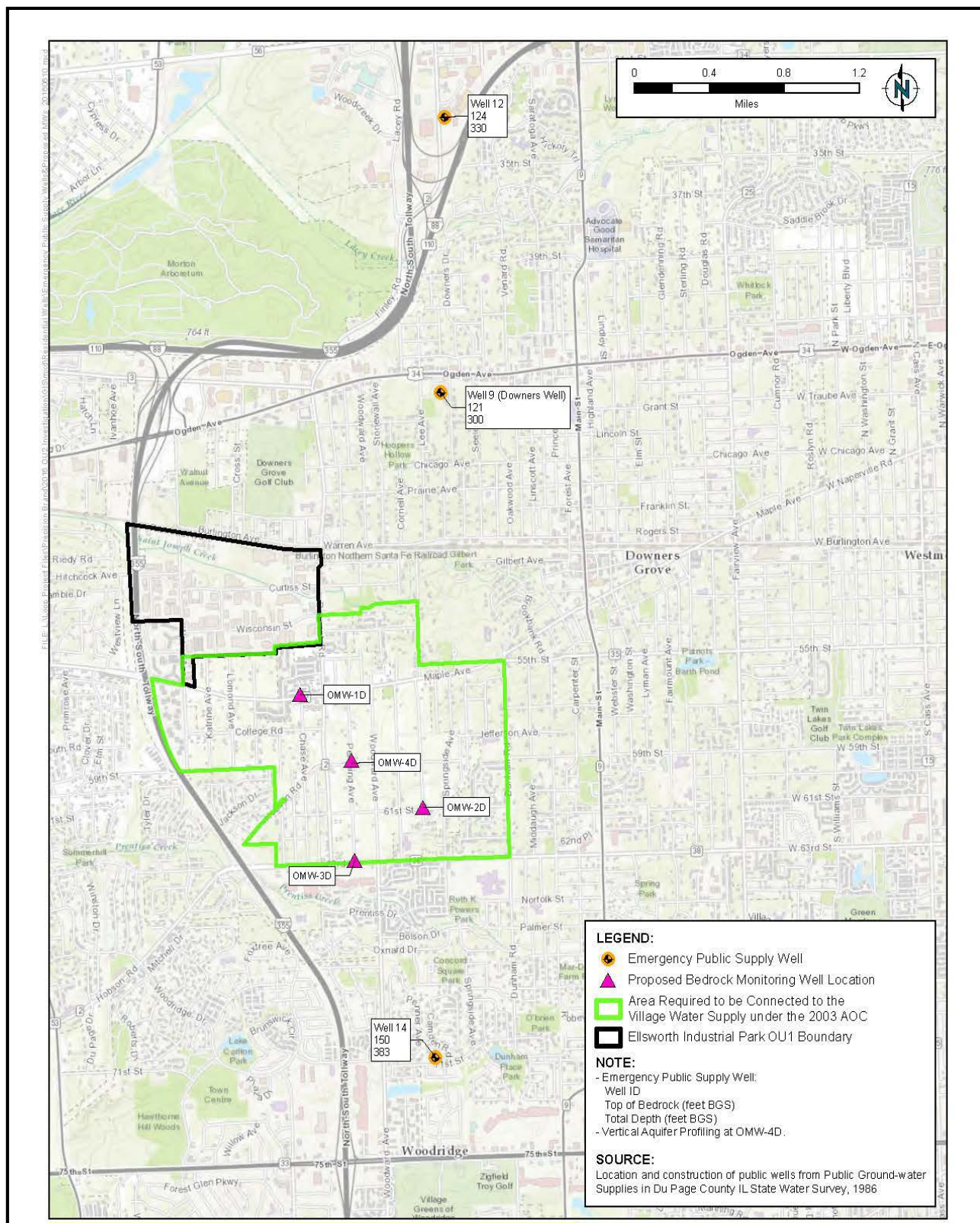
In 2002, U.S. EPA and Illinois EPA sent special notice letters to 19 businesses at the industrial park requesting they enter into negotiations to investigate and deal with the park's soil and area groundwater contamination.

In 2003, a group of PRPs, including many of the parties to the new settlement agreement, entered a settlement in which they agreed to fund hookups to a public drinking water supply for 800 residences in unincorporated Downers Grove. Water connections to the 800 homes near the industrial park began in the fall of 2003 and were completed in spring 2004. During this time, U.S. EPA conducted initial studies of the area to determine groundwater characteristics, distribution and flow direction.

In 2005, the same group of PRPs entered into a second settlement for OU 1. They agreed to help U.S. EPA pay for an RI/FS for identification and control of source areas in the industrial park where releases and potential releases of VOCs presented an unacceptable ongoing threat to groundwater. The federal Agency has completed the source control investigation described in that settlement but has decided to defer selection of final source control cleanup steps until after completion of the groundwater RI/FS.

## **Next steps**

The results of the current sampling effort will be used to determine the locations for additional monitoring wells. These wells will be sampled periodically to monitor the contamination in the groundwater and determine what cleanup is necessary.



Map of Ellsworth Industrial Park site with monitoring well locations (shown in purple).